

NSC BRIEFING

2 March 1955

CAMBODIAN KING'S ABDICATION

- I. In suddenly deciding to abdicate, Cambodian king Norodon repeats on a more positive scale a tactic he used to get his way from the French.
 - A. In 1953, after issuing an unprecedented blast against French policy during a stay in New York, he refused to return to his capital until French met his demands.
 - B. His present gripe is against both foreign and domestic criticism of his plans for constitutional reform.
 - C. Wants to replace elections scheduled for April with referendum which would decide whether or not constitution would be drastically revised in a manner which would virtually eliminate political parties in which there is considerable republican sentiment.
 - D. He conceives his program as a device to meet both demands of democracy and Cambodian desire for paternalistic monarchy.
 - E. King's particular annoyance is International Control Commission's concern with what he conceives to be purely domestic affairs.
 - F. Canadians, Indians, as well as British have charged his plan not compatible with Geneva agreement which called for elections in 1955 under constitution then in force.

- II. Norodon is thoroughly sincere and also highly sensitive to

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- A. Chosen for his job in 1941 by council or regents because he was related to both of two rival branches of royal family.

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C. After finally standing up to French, he won for Cambodia a considerable measure of real independence.

D. Abdication ^{IS} in favor of his father, Prince Suramint ~~is irregular since Cambodian practice is for monarchs to be chosen by council of regents.~~
APPARENTLY APPROVED

1. Suramint, never king, has had no active part in government for years past.

III. Doubtful that king intends to drop out of political scene.

- A. But Cambodian stability bound to suffer by his precipitate act.